

world scout jamboree 2023

An Opportunity to Smile and Whistle



One hundred and eight South African scouts were fortunate to join 43000 other scouts from 158 countries at the 25th World Scout Jamboree in South Korea during August 2023.

On our arrival in Korea, we were hosted at

the Korean Scouting Training Centre for a two day long Shakedown Camp. The South African scouts came from different parts of our country, so the shakedown camp was an opportunity for them to get to know each other and to build effective patrols and troops. The contingent was split into 3 troops, named after African musical instruments: Djembe (drum), Mbira (thumb piano) and Ramkie (guitar). Each troop comprised 4 patrols of 9 scouts..

Prior to our 4 night stay in the capital Seoul, we visited the demilitarized zone at the border with North Korea. This was an opportunity to learn about the Korean War (1950 to 1953). We spent a day visiting a Korean Folk Village and Hwaseong Fortress where we had a chance to test



our archery skills. The following day, scouts split into patrols and decided which Seoul sites they wanted to visit. Popular choices were the Aquarium, Illusion Museum, Gangnam Style monument, Raccoon Cafe and Seoul Tower. The contingent spent the last day in Seoul at the Lotte Amusement Centre. En route to the Jamboree site we overnighted at Gongju Hanok Village and visited various historical sites and tombs in the area.

Then the big day dawned and we arrived at the Jamboree site. SaeManGeum (meaning: a new and brilliant land) is an estuarine tidal flat on the coast of the Yellow Sea and is reclaimed land measuring 6.2 km by 1.7 km. Prior to our arrival there had been torrential rain at the site, making conditions underfoot yielding at best and ankle deep water in the worst places. This meant a new experience for most of us, tents needed to be pitched on pallets. Troops busied themselves with campsite construction: kitchen and washing up facilities, gateway and flagpole.

Walking to the Opening Ceremony was a highlight, spirited South Africans proudly singing and blowing vuvuzelas. Naturally we all went crazy when South Africa was introduced during the opening. Another highlight was the epic drone show that formed part of the opening.



With the Jamboree properly underway, we were dealt another curveball. Daily temperatures approaching 40 degrees coupled with very high humidity resulted in many participants having to be treated for heatstroke. Daily Jamboree activities were cancelled as a result of the heat.



Unfortunately the jamboree site did not have any natural shade, further aggravating the problem.

The cleaning and maintenance of the ablution facilities had not been properly planned. Toilets became a health hazard. This in addition to the extreme heat caused the UK, US and Singapore contingents to withdraw from the Jamboree. Following their departure, multiple remedial actions such as

air conditioned cooling buses and sevenfold more cleaning staff resulted in conditions improving dramatically.





On Cultural Day, we welcomed visitors to our campsite with Rooibos Tea, Rusks, Fizzers and Champion Toffees. They also had an opportunity to play the vuvuzela and Mbira. Despite Jamboree activities being curtailed, scouts still met each other and traded badges and scarves.

Looming tropical storm Khanun ultimately caused the evacuation of the entire Jamboree site. Over 40000 people were transported away from the site by 1000

buses in less than 14 hours, quite a logistical achievement. The South African contingent of 135 people was fortunate to be accommodated at the Kolon Human Resources Centre about an hour outside Seoul. Although we did not encounter other scouts during the 2 days we spent there, our adult leaders planned programs for our scouts.

43000 Jamboree scouts were reunited at the Seoul World Cup Stadium for the closing ceremony. This was followed by a 2 hour K-Pop concert that the scouts thoroughly enjoyed! We spent our last day in Seoul at the Gwangjang Market before the long journey home.



Although we experienced multiple challenges during the Jamboree and did not enjoy what the brochure promised, our scouts had the time of their

lives. They all had a positive experience that was an epic adventure. Our thanks to the Head of Contingent, David van Eyk for the sterling job he did arranging our trip and resolving all the challenges we faced while in South Korea.

To any scout or adult leader that has an opportunity to go to the 26th World Scout Jamboree in Poland in 2027, don't hesitate, start your preparations now. You won't regret it!

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